News From Somewhere

By
Project
Alphistia
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I Kid Ye Not

It seems that my genetic heritage includes a tendency to produce kidney stones. LOTS of them! In 2022, 2023, and 2025, I have had three kidney stone attacks resulting in several emergency room visits, one hospitalization, and multiple surgeries. Sigh…

The most recent surgery was two days before Thanksgiving. Strangely, it did not involve horrendous pain, and I didn't rush to the ER this time. My primary care doctor noticed that a few indicators in a recent check-up were out-of-whack and asked me to get a cat-scan. That showed a stone was stuck in the exit passage… A week later I was in the operating room, and it was removed without complications. All "routine" for me now. The only thing missing this time was howling and tears from pain.

My brother Mike had 11 stones removed all at once about 8-9 years ago, and still has one left that he has an uneasy truce with…it won't budge. And several cousins have had multiple bouts through the years. Can I blame the Skaggs side or the Ennises? SKAGGSIES no doubt…we've always been ornery…

It seems the rest of my days will include these periodic disruptions. I'm not very happy about that, but there isn't much I can do except take care of myself when it happens. I've modified my diet to try to eat foods that are low-oxalate (it's complicated…don't worry about it if you don't have this issue) and I take a medication that probably helped me skip a year since the last time I had an attack. I am on Medicare now, and in the horrid American health insurance system, that is a somewhat adequate place to be as far as cost is concerned. So should I consider myself lucky? NO! 🙂

Wintry Autumn

Champaign-Urbana/Alphistia has a rather pretty autumn each year, largely because there are so many trees in town. We have weeks of beautiful colors and then overnight

the trees drop all their leaves and are bare. Right before Thanksgiving the weather usually gets colder.

This year we've had two real snowfalls mid-autumn, and the start of winter officially is another three weeks away. On November 29 we got 8 inches of snow. Very pleasant weather to stay inside and recuperate from my surgical "procedure" ;) Looking out the window in the upstairs back room was quite pretty though as the snow continued all day long. Now things have become icy, and very frigid temperatures will be with us this coming week. I'll be inside 99.9% of the time with Pushkin!

Obligatory Pic of Pushkin

Pushkin likes to hunt! He regularly steals my socks whenever he can find one or a pair, and brings them to me…In his cute lil head he thinks a sock is a squirrel and wants to present his prey to me. It's adorable because he always makes such a big fuss, and I am sure always to praise him to the skies when he runs to me with a sock in his mouth. A few days ago though he could only find a pair of underpants. I had set out a pair for after a shower, and within minutes he swiped it off the bed and brought it down to me. "Look Tony! A SQUIRREL!" No, just jockey shorts. Love that kitty…

Just a Reminder…

The only country in the OECD that does not provide universal access to healthcare is the United States. That is reflected in American life expectancy stats. There are 38 OECD members. The US is ranked 32nd on the list for how long its citizens live, and will undoubtedly drop even lower under the trump regime. All the West European countries, Australia, NZ, Japan, and even certain East European countries outrank the US on this stat. Albania (not in the EU or the OECD) is one of the least developed countries in Europe (only Moldova is poorer). Albanians have a life expectancy at par with the US.

Alphistia of course would NOT have a system based on the US, with its for-profit uber alles paradigm. Alphistia would be civilized, with a national health insurance system: de-monetized, and non-profit. How would it be paid for? Taxes, of course. It would emphasize preventive patient care…there would be no shareholders, no private insurance at all. Also no premiums, deductibles, co-pays, co-insurance, surprise billings, pre-existing conditions, denied claims, and/or medical bankruptcies. And Alphistians could expect to live as long as Albanians, Canadians, or even Icelanders!

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